

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

I. SCOPE

Philosophy and Religion are the areas of knowledge most concerned with the great questions regarding the ultimate meanings and ends of life, and the norms of ethical relationships among individuals and groups. Unlike the sciences, these disciplines appeal not to controlled experiment and mathematical or statistical analysis for gaining insights into reality, but to the rational analysis of experience common to all, to the dictates of what are taken to be revelation in one tradition or another, and to the deliverances of meditation or mystical experience. The Library of Congress seeks to collect systematically and worldwide in these areas; no sources of wisdom regarding the human condition are excluded. All time periods, languages, and formats are within scope and actively sought.

II. SIZE

The Philosophy and Religion collections are largely found in materials in the General Collections in classes B through BJ for Philosophy and BL through BX for Religion. (Psychology, regarded as one of the sciences, is included at BF; at the turn of the last century this newly developing field was regarded as a subset of studies of the mind and mental phenomena, most appropriated classed within Philosophy.) As of the Librarian's *Annual Report* for 2006, the Philosophy classes B-BJ were comprised of 218,231 titles in 358,674 volumes; and Religion in BL-BX held 603,935 titles in 788,410 volumes.

The Library's collections, of course, extend to special collection and non-book materials that do not receive, or are not included in, these classification numbers, even though they treat comparable subjects; these materials may be found in Rare Books, Manuscripts, Hebraic, Near East and Asian sections, Law and Microforms

III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

Three particular strengths of the Library's collections stand out. The first is the size of the non-English holdings; because of our wide-ranging and long-standing overseas acquisitions programs, as well as the range of our blanket order arrangements with developed countries, our foreign holdings are particularly strong in comparison with other research libraries. The second strength is the unique collection of a set of more than two million American doctoral dissertations on microfiche and microfilm, over 80,000 of which are concerned with Philosophy or Religion. Other libraries collect selectively in this area and depend more and more on electronic access via *ProQuest*, but the Library of Congress uniquely continues to collect dissertations in permanent and

preservable microfiche formats. The third strength lies in the newly developing area of Environmental Ethics, a field growing in importance with the increased globalization of trade and concomitant worldwide competition for limited resources. This latter field is heavily dependent on cross-disciplinary connections between philosophical and religious collections and those in the various natural sciences, as well as those in political science and international law.

Beyond these specifiable strengths, the general cross-disciplinarity of the Library's collections is of immense benefit to students of Philosophy and Religion because virtually all major subject areas, from A to Z, have philosophical aspects or ethical implications; considerations not just of what "counts" as evidence within the different disciplines (i.e., the philosophy of history, philosophy of law, philosophy of science, etc.) but also aesthetic considerations (fine arts, music, mathematics) extend into classes well beyond B-BX.

IV. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The Library has subscriptions to a number of databases, not on the open Internet, in the areas of philosophy and religion; among them are *Philosopher's Index*, *L'Annee Philologique*, *ATLA Religion Database*, *Patrologia Latina* (CD-ROM), *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, *Credo Reference: Religion & Philosophy*, *Index Islamicus*, *Religion Periodicals* (via *ProQuest*), and many others that include coverage of religious or philosophical areas, among them *America: History & Life*, *Historical Abstracts*, *Reference Universe*, *American Periodicals Series*, *Periodicals Index Online*, *FRANCIS*, *Nineteenth Century Masterfile*, and the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index* (a component of *Web of Science*), to name just a few.

American Memory includes a number of resources that have ties to the area of religion. A few specific collections are *American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940*, *Early Virginia Religious Petitions*, the presidential papers of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln, the Hannah Arendt papers, and *An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera*. Collections pertinent to religious history are also to be found in formats such as music scores, prints and photographs, motion pictures, and manuscripts.

LC's *Web Archives: Minerva* holds the *Papal Transition 2005 Web Archive* created after the death of Pope John Paul II. Many of the other *Minerva* collections, although not specifically focused on religion, include the web presence of religious groups and voices.

The Library's Web site for *Exhibitions*, as well as *Global Gateway*, *Veterans History*, and *Thomas*, also contain material of interest to religious studies and philosophy, particularly political philosophy.

V. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

The Library's general collections are especially strong in the areas of Western religions, the Bible, and denominational studies. Outside the general collections there is important material in almost every Division. The Manuscripts Division, for example, holds the papers of Thomas Jefferson, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Hannah Arendt, as well as the Alaskan Church archives of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America. The Rare Book and Special Collections Division has both the Gutenberg and the Mainz Bibles, in addition to over 1,000 other rare Bibles and a special collection of Reformation publications. The African/Middle East Division holds the Kirkor Manassian collection of Near Eastern books, while the Asian Division has the William Woodville Rockville collection of Tibetan books and manuscripts. The Law Library has an extensive collection of Canon Law; the Microforms Reading Room owns microfilm copies of manuscripts from Mount Athos and St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai, as well as books on microfilm from the Library of the Greek and Armenian Patriarchates in Jerusalem. The Franciscan Archives (Archivo Franciscano) from the sixteenth through the eighteen centuries are also available in a microfilm collection.

For a more detailed overview of the Library's holdings, in all formats, on religion, see *Religion Collections in Libraries and Archives: A Guide to Resources in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia* found on the Main Reading Room Web page on the Library of Congress web site.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

The Library has not collected strongly in the areas of religious sects and non-Western religions. This is an area that needs further attention. The Library collects selectively in areas of practical theology and religious education and very selectively in devotional materials.